



Introduction

Having made my debut last year with my first report as Chair of Bees United – it would seem that I now face “second season syndrome” in having to report once again (although as Brentford fans we know that there is no such thing...).

I have to, of course, make the point clear – as indeed I do at every Bees United board meeting – that I must thank all members of the Bees United board for their contributions and efforts in respect of everything that we had done this year. Every member of the board is an unpaid volunteer who gives up their time to help keep the organisation running – so I am pleased to be able to publicly thank all of them for all they have done this year.

Membership

Bees United is first and foremost a members’ organisation. I will also risk repeating myself from my report last year, as I have to acknowledge that we are fortunate to benefit from a wide variety of contributions from members who help in many different ways and who also all have given their time and expertise freely in supporting the initiatives we have worked on through the year. We are a members’ organisation and we are grateful for all our members do for us in whatever capacity and in all the engagements that they have with us.

And why should our members care about Bees United? We are all undoubtedly aware of the debate and discussion regarding a new regulator for football – an independent football regulator created by Parliament that is intended to help prevent bad actors and unsavoury types from doing harm to the clubs we love, and it now appears certain that we will see the regulator come into play in the near future. However, we are perhaps fortunate that we saw off our dark days and ended up as owners of the club before [agreeing to sell the club to Matthew Benham](#) (nearly 20 years ago).

As such we are a club that I think is the envy of the rest of the football world, and of other football fans, with the level of involvement that we have as the official supporters trust. We remain the sole Premier League football club with a supporter director on the board, continue to hold the “BU Special Share” (that protects the sale of the stadium) and also continue to have monies lent to the club interest free to continue that (at this point in our history now symbolic) financial connection between clubs and fans. Without you the members, there is no Bees United and there would be no special share and no seat on the board. Some of these things may come to pass by legislation in creating the regulator – but I am proud that we as the official supporters’ trust have that engagement and role on the basis of trust and respect and valuing our input as opposed to it being dictated by statute.

In October 2023, we hit the target set in the previous AGM to reach 3,750 members and we then targeted 4,000 members by the next AGM. As I write this our membership stands at 3,798.

I will take just a moment here to thank John Scott for the work he does as Membership Secretary and the work he does to keep us compliant with data protection law.

Bees United Board - changes

At the last AGM we said farewells to a number of board members and welcomed Graham Hancock who accepted the task of picking up the Treasurer role – and as a result this is his first outing as Treasurer for completing these accounts, and some details on Finances are at the end of this report as well as there being a separate report from Graham, but I do have to say thank you to Jim Walsh for his assistance in transitioning the role to Graham and also a big thank you to Graham for taking the role on and getting these accounts completed!

Onto departures and I am reminded that our rules require that board members stand down after a maximum period of 12 years consecutive service on the board. And so this means that we are obliged to say goodbye to Jon Gosling. I am not sure how I can properly pay tribute to [Jon’s involvement with Bees United](#) and Brentford as he starts his 55th year as a Brentford fan. Jon has been as passionate about the club off the field as on the field in my experience. He has been involved with fans groups since their inception, he has served on the BU Board, he was elected to be



the supporter director on the club's board (2006-2009) and even appears in a pre-season squad photo! Jon truly plays the conscience of the fan and will never shy from asking the difficult question or of making sure that we stick to the values we set ourselves and always, always improves any consideration of procedures, processes and protocols (and spent untold hours refreshing the BU Rules a number of years ago). The Board loses a true fan, who is a dedicated proponent of supporters' rights and of doing the right thing – and of asking the right questions of ourselves.

We also co-opted Jonathan Burchill on to the BU Board in the year – and many of you will know of Jonathan by following his regular updates on social media and also on the Beesotted podcast. Jonathan has been involved in a number of history and heritage projects and we will be asking our members to confirm his appointment as a director at the AGM.

With the recent changes and retirements to the BU Board, as a board we will be considering the need for a refresh and the identification of skills gaps and experience that might benefit Bees United with our next challenges and to help us achieve the things we want to do next. Our Deputy Chair, Sharon Wright, will help lead on this exercise.

Fan Engagement

The Fan Advisory Board has now completed its first half dozen meetings and has been another important step in fan engagement. The FAB is jointly Chaired by Bees United and BIAS and I'd encourage you all to ensure that you do follow the [summary of the meetings](#) that the club publishes.

Bees United Communications and events

Our monthly newsletter has continued to be the core of our communications with our Members.

Our members survey earlier in the year (which over 800 of our members completed) gave us interesting insight into our members views on a number of topics – including any pricing of tickets (which remains a hot topic of debate – perhaps more so at other clubs than at Brentford but we will not be complacent). Watch this space for future members surveys and also the possibility of some more specific member events.

I'd also like to thank Colleen Wong for continuing to lead on our social media presence and we will continue to work on bringing you interesting insights and thoughts and updates on matters affecting you as fans and as members of Bees United.

Compliance and BU Governance

One of the four pillars of the BU Vision is [Management](#) which states as its ambition "Maintaining first class governance and financial management of Bees United with a view to growing the membership."

I have to make special mention here of Don Tanswell without whom much of what Bees United does (and wants to do) would not happen, or would stall and not get completed. Don keeps everything on track and somehow keeps all the plates spinning without fail. Thank you Don for all that you do!

History and Heritage

We continue to do a lot of work in respect of one of BU's "Four Pillars" ("To Promote and protect the history and heritage of the Club.")

Having become the owners of the club's memorabilia and archive we continue to work to organise, catalogue, repair and conserve all of the items that we have taken ownership of so that they can be maintained for future fans. Our plans remain to digitise as much of this as we can and ultimately have a comprehensive catalogue of items and enable us to undertake "pop up" events and in the longer term hopefully work closely with the [Brentford FC Community Sports Trust](#) to create environments for experience and learning based around the club and its history.



Our next challenge is to ensure that the collection stays refreshed and updated and we are working with the club to ensure that we can capture new items for the collection – and also ensure that this includes our recent history and the amazing journey the women’s team are on! I want to make special recognition here of Paul Stembridge, Jonathan Burchill and Sian Allpress for their efforts in ensuring that we maintain compliance with museum standards for our collection and for their uncounted hours of work curating, identifying and cataloguing the collection.

It remains a core part of our strategy that we are a true participant in the local Brentford community and we continue to contribute to community events. We launched the BU Community Fund – which we plan to continue this year – which allowed us to make donations to The Musical Museum in Brentford and the Brentford Penguins. We have been responsible for more plaque commemoration – with a plaque being placed at Harry Curtis’ former house (so, just a warning for you Thomas....) and of course most memorably and most recently the unveiling of the [Remembrance plaque](#) to honour our former-players who lost their lives in conflict. One dedicated fan in particular needs to be thanked for enabling us to have this record of those we have lost: Paul Briers. Without Paul’s tireless dedication and thorough, detailed research over the years we would not have been able to recognise those 31 players whose names are commemorated in that plaque. We thank you Paul for all of that work and commitment.

We have been grateful to receive generous donations of memorabilia and archive items – and we thank all of those fans who have given items to us, you make the archive richer and will help tell the story of our history as a club for generations to come. We would call on any fans who have collections or items that they want to ensure has a good Brentford dedicated and committed home to reach out to us as we are happy to accept gifts of collections or items.

Finance

Our financial position is possible because of the donations which our members make, and everyone at BU thanks each member who continues to financially support our work with regular donations. We have also continued with a cost-free way that members can support BU by giving via retail purchases through [Easyfundraising](#), this is shown as other operating income.

During the year the board has completed the implementation of a treasury plan where we have placed tranches of monies on different fixed term deposits to maximise the amount of interest that we can generate from reserves. This has resulted in a significant increase in interest earned during the year and is likely to increase further over 2024/25 which will reflect a full year’s interest on such deposits.

As a result of the increased interest income, this year we have been able to increase considerably our expenditure and still record a small surplus. The majority of the increase relates to specific projects classified as heritage expenditure, these are in line with expectations and include installing plaques marking events in Brentford’s history, repairs to artefacts and scanning and storage of archives.

I will finish by reflecting on the [Jon Gosling](#) article where he mentions the 2008-2009 season and ends with the statement: “That season was the start of the Club’s rise to better things and who knows where it may lead us next”.

I doubt Jon – or indeed any of us – would have guessed where it would lead Brentford FC to next and I also know that it is a good question to all of us at Bees United to challenge ourselves as to how we also build on from where we have come as an organisation from those different days.

Stuart Hatcher
December 2024